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THE HEGEMONY OF THE FAR EAST

BY JOHN C. FERGUSON

THE stirring events now transpiring in Europe should not be allowed to divert the entire attention of the world from the changes which the present war will make in the Far East. Up to the outbreak of hostilities this summer a comparison of the interests of Europe and America in Asia would have shown the relative superiority of Great Britain. Even in comparison with Japan, Great Britain could rightly claim a preponderating influence in Asia. Is this likely to be maintained, or is the hegemony to pass into other hands?

A rapid survey of the far-reaching influence of Great Britain east of the Suez Canal is necessary in order that its scope may be grasped. Arabia is a negligible territory apart from the commanding seaport of Aden and the island of Perim at the southern entrance of the Red Sea, but both of these places are British possessions. The strength of the British position in Persia was evident during the events of 1911 which centered around Mr. Morgan Shuster. In spite of the armed forces of Russia which threatened the northern boundaries, English diplomacy was able to obtain without any warlike demonstration an equal voice in the supervisory control of the Persian Government. This result was accomplished notwithstanding the alleged support by Germany of Russian designs. The reason for the desirability of leadership in Arabia, Persia, and other small countries of Asia centers around the British possession of India. India is the most vital of all portions of the British dominions outside of the British Isles. The amount of territory owned, controlled, or dominated by the Government of India has grown steadily year by year since the eventful battle of Wandiwash in 1760, and the capture of the hill fortress of Giugi during the following year, by which events the French lost the last vestige of their control in the penin-

sula. The position of Governor created for Lord Clive in 1758 grew into the importance of that of Governor-General for Warren Hastings in 1774, and of Viceroy for Earl Canning in 1858. On January 1, 1877, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India at the great Durbar held at Delhi. The influence of the great British Empire of India now reaches to Afghanistan, Beluchistan, Tibet, Burma, Straits Settlements, and Ceylon. It controls the sea from Suez to the Pacific Ocean and spreads to the islands of the Malay Archipelago.

From India the extension of influence to China and Japan was easy and natural. In 1792 William Pitt sent Lord Macartney on his mission to the Chinese Emperor, Chien Lung, and in 1815 Lord Liverpool sent Lord Amherst on a second embassy. In 1819 the island of Singapore was purchased from Johore as a half-way station to China, thus making possible the forward policy of Captain Elliot in 1839, which resulted in the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. Under this treaty Great Britain obtained the cession of the island of Hong-Kong and the opening to trade of the five ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai. Subsequent treaties gave Great Britain "concessions" in ports which were opened to foreign trade, and these concessions, now numbering about a dozen, are controlled by British consuls. Following on the heels of the American opening of the doors of Japan came the extension of British influence. In 1858 Lord Elgin signed the treaty by which Japan agreed to open six places to British trade and residence, and to leave the settlement of questions affecting British subjects to the jurisdiction of British authorities. American influence in Japan has been very strong, but it has been second to that of Great Britain, to which nation, as in China, must be granted the first place. British writers such as Curzon, Norman, and Krausse have not been slow to claim the predominant rôle in the Far East for their nation, and no matter how unwelcome the fact may be to other nationalities its truth must be acknowledged.

Previous to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 the only rivals to British leadership in Asia with large territorial areas were France and Russia. The earlier competitors from Spain, Portugal, and Holland had long since been outdistanced, but France had not forgotten her ambition to offset her loss of India to the British. "Farther India"

allured her, and she waited for a favorable opportunity. Louis XVI. made an alliance with Gialong, the exiled King of Annam, but was prevented from reaping any benefits from it by the outbreak of the Revolution. French missionaries continued to carry on their work, but met with constant opposition and not infrequently with cruel deaths. In 1858 a strong force was despatched by France against Tourane as an act of reprisal for the treatment of missionaries, and subsequent military campaigns fully established French power throughout Annam, Cambodia, Tongking, and Cochin-China. A brief war with China occurred in 1884, the chief result of which was the extension of French influence into the southwestern Chinese provinces of Yun-nan and Kueichou. For the last quarter of a century the chief rival to British influence in southern China has been France, and this rivalry has been of no small importance.

Russian influence has been exerted wholly by the up-building of Siberia. She was the first of the European nations to make a treaty with China, the Treaty of Nertchinsk having been signed in 1689. The Trans-Siberian Railway was the culmination of the policy of the Russian development of Siberia. The desire for an ice-free port was responsible for the formation of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company which built the line southward from Harbin to Port Arthur and Dalny. This was followed by the decision of Russia to fortify these places, and thus to plant the seeds of her own undoing. This railway brought slight, if any, commercial advantages to Russia, and there was no threatening by it of British commercial supremacy. The rivalry of military strength was, on the other hand, so serious that Great Britain replied to it by leasing from China the port of Wei-hai-wei, directly across the Gulf of Pe-chi-li, and Japan soon found that war was necessary to prevent the strangling of her plans for the annexation of Korea.

In 1898 the Philippine Islands fell into the hands of the United States, and in the same year Kiao-chou was seized by the Germans, but it is doubtful if either nation has acquired any additional prestige or strength from these new possessions. Neither of them has been a serious rival of British supremacy, although both have been constantly adding to their large interests.

More serious than the growth of French and Russian in-

fluence has been the rapid advancement of Japan. In 1872 the first Japanese railway was opened, in 1889 a Constitution was granted by the Emperor, and in 1891 the first Parliament met. In 1894 occurred the war with China and the beginnings of Japanese Empire in Korea; in 1897 a gold standard was adopted; in 1899 extra-territorial rights of foreigners were abolished; in 1904-5 Russia was driven out of southern Manchuria. These great changes have been followed by the annexation of Korea, the extension of Japanese prestige in Manchuria, and the joining of Japan with Russia, England, France, and Germany in forming the Quintuple Group which is loaning money to the new Republic of China. In twenty years Japan has advanced from being regarded by Europe as on the same level as China to being a first-class Power, allied with Great Britain, and consulted in all matters affecting the Far East by all nations. This growth has been phenomenal and could only have been achieved by a nation of extraordinary ability. Her territory extends from Sakhalin through the Japanese and Loochoo Islands to Formosa, includes Korea, and is reaching out to the three eastern provinces of Manchuria. Chinese students have flocked to Japan, Japanese travelers, teachers, merchants, and agents have swarmed to every port of China. Japan has easily passed ahead of France and Russia and has become the chief competitor with England for the hegemony of the Far East. Will England retain it or has it now passed to Japan?

Many features of the present situation point to the retention by England of her hard-won leadership. Her financial interests are larger than those of any other nation. The annual revenues and expenditures of India are larger than those of Japan, so that the consideration of the comparative domestic conditions of the two nations would leave Great Britain still in the lead of Japan as an Asiatic power. In investments outside of their own territories Japan has little to her credit balance outside of a few small loans to China, which would aggregate about ten million dollars. On the other hand, England has investments everywhere from Suez to Japan. As an example, China has borrowed more from British investors than from all other nations combined. Japan buys from England three or four times as much as she sells to her, just as she sells more to America than she buys. In the one example of the sale of cotton

goods in China, Japan in the last five years has cut into the trade of Great Britain and America, but she has only succeeded in outclassing us, while Great Britain still keeps the lead. In 1909, 10,690,000 pieces of British, 3,850,000 pieces of American, and 1,390,000 pieces of Japanese cotton goods were imported into China. In 1913 the British continued to head the list with 11,700,000, Japanese came next with 5,710,000, while American imports had dropped to 2,280,000. This supremacy has been maintained in spite of Japan's relative nearness to the market and the cheap wages of her salesmen.

In banking, leadership in China and Japan still remains with a British bank, the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, strongly supported by the Chartered Bank. Japanese banks, such as the Yokohama Specie Bank, have risen rapidly to importance in their own country, but cannot compete in large business with their British competitors. In shipping, Japan comes nearer to the level of Great Britain in the Far East than in any other commercial condition, but even in this she still holds a secondary place. In a word, it must be confessed that all phases of the financial and commercial relations of the Far East show Great Britain still to hold the commanding leadership. The proposal of a Japanese statesman last summer that there should be a union of British money and Japanese brains for the development of China shows the estimate held in Japan of British preponderance in financial matters, even though it is not conclusive as to mental outfit.

In the size and location of her territories, as in finance, Great Britain leads. The vast territory of India is protected on all sides, and its natural location shuts it off to a large extent from immediate contact with its neighbors.

The most influential factor in determining for the immediate future the hegemony of the Far East is the comparative military and naval strength of the two nations, and here Japan has everything in her favor. Europe will call for all the military and naval equipment which Great Britain can command and will leave no surplus which could strengthen her present forces in the Far East. The comparison must therefore be made between Japan and the forces of Great Britain as they are now actually in Far-Eastern service, without taking into account Great Britain's European contingent. In other words, the military and

naval strength of India and the British colonies of Asia, together with Australasia, should be compared with that of Japan.

As to the army, Japan has a homogeneous force, commanded by her own officers, with a large number of men that have seen severe fighting in the Russo-Japanese war. India has an army of her own men commanded by British officers. In potential numerical strength there can be but little difference in the two armies, but in effective fighting the unified national spirit of the Japanese should make them superior to the mixed army of India. In naval strength Japan leads. Among the people of China, Siam, Persia, Tibet, and the smaller Asiatic states, Japan has the prestige of having defeated Russia and declared war on Germany. The thrilling effect of a single Asiatic power being able to resist a European army and to conquer it has spread throughout Asia and has aroused hopes in the hearts of all Asiatics that in some good future time Europeans may no longer be able to dominate them. Too much importance can scarcely be given to the new hopes of Asia which have been directly traceable to the defeat of Russia by Japan. The present attack upon Kiao-chou will stimulate these aspirations. In a comparison of prestige among Asiatic peoples, as also in military and naval strength, there is no doubt in my mind that the leadership has now passed to Japan.

The effect of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance has been to secure the stability of English rule in India, but by making possible the defeat of a second European nation in China it is having the effect of carrying away the hegemony of the Far East from Great Britain, which has long held it, and passing it over to Japan. It may be considered as a natural corollary of the rise of Japan that the leadership of Asia should be held by this Asiatic nation, but we may be sure that England has not wished for such an outcome of the changed conditions. Her hands have been forced by the larger considerations of her vast empire. My conclusion is that she will retain for a long time the controlling influence in all financial and commercial matters, but that the real hegemony of the Far East has now definitely gone to Japan. Other nations can only hope that Japan will show the same generous spirit to others which has characterized British leadership.

JOHN C. FERGUSON.